

EXCISE

SCS JONES, James W.

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File

September 2, 1977

Richard A. McCoy

PEOPLE'S TEMPLE MISSION

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY John Ammons DATE 2-24-81
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

I met with [REDACTED] today to confirm her health and well being as requested by her mother in a letter to the Ambassador dated August 24, 1977. [REDACTED] told me she had talked to her mother last night and had heard that an additional letter had come in. Although I was aware that a second letter came in from [REDACTED] mother indicating she no longer requested us to contact her daughter, I was unable to contact [REDACTED] prior to her calling my office.

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I used this opportunity to discuss with [REDACTED] my recent trip to Jonestown and to emphasize to her that while a number of inquiries may be made at this time, no unusual inference should be drawn. I informed her that I had reported to Washington on the results of my visit and while I naturally, did not go into the details of what I reported, I did indicate to her that the information would not have been considered unfavorable toward the Temple.

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I explained to [REDACTED] the importance of creating a climate of mutual trust between the People's Temple and the Embassy because of the large number of Americans presently in Guyana. Moreover, with the possibility of more coming, it was essential that we establish lines of communications; e.g., since there are large numbers of elderly people at Jonestown, the Embassy will be verifying for the Social Security Administration their whereabouts and well being as is required annually by the Social Security Administration of those Americans who are living abroad and receiving social security benefits. Furthermore, the People's Temple had to expect these people will be dying and in that connection the Embassy would be responsible for preparing the official report of death. Also, in view of the isolated area of Jonestown and the likelihood that numbers of these elderly people will become ill, there will obviously be situations involving medical emergencies and, of course, the Embassy is prepared to assist in that regard whenever it could.

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There is also the probability that at some time immediate relatives of members of the People's Temple will become seriously ill or die in the United States, normally the Department is notified of the emergency by the relatives in the United States. I further pointed out to [REDACTED] that with the very large number of young children

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at Jonestown, the organization had to expect at some point the parents of these children will probably request their return to the United States so I will in all probability have to confirm that the children are in the country. Additionally, as I receive inquiries from immediate relatives of members here in Guyana it will be helpful if I can know immediately whether these people are in fact in Guyana and if so, where. Therefore, Bishop Jones and his staff should be aware of the multi faceted role that the Embassy has towards American citizens residing abroad and the services that we can provide. I stated that I had recommended to the Charge that myself or another Consular Officer visit the area every six months to perform whatever statutory services that are required and also as a way of maintaining contact with the group!.

I told [REDACTED] that I realized that Bishop Jones and the organization were very concerned about attacks against them that had appeared primarily in the press in California so they would probably expect that at least in the near future, the Embassy would be receiving requests to determine health and well being of members of the organization. I reiterated that I only acted upon official requests from the U. S. Government and that in no way would the Embassy ever take sides in any disputes that may occur between members and former members of the organization. E. 56

In conclusion, I informed her in acting on official requests from Washington such as fugitives from justice from the United States, or child custody matters all such action would be coordinated with the Government of Guyana and in some cases such as child custody disputes settled in the Courts of Guyana. Naturally, once a decision is made all parties would be obligated to abide by the Court's decision.

COMMENT

I have been at pains to emphasize to the People's Temple that the Embassy is not prejudiced towards them because of the reports we have been receiving from the United States. I have tried to be objective and straightforward with all parties in this respect because, after all, the parties concerned are American citizens and as such are entitled to impartial, objective action and reporting by us. I believe it is vital that the People's Temple here believe we are objective since it is apparent that the Embassy will be involved in various actions concerning the People's Temple. In addition to this, of course, is the requirement that we be prepared to provide the statutory services that I enumerated to [REDACTED] and earlier to Bishop Jones. I do not believe we would be performing our primary function of the E. 56

C. A. Jones, Charge d'Affaires a.i.

protection of American citizens and their interests in Guyana if we found ourselves in a posture of suspicion and hostility between the Embassy and the People's Temple. This would only hurt us and those Americans who apparently, sincerely believe in and place their trust with Bishop Jones. This is not to say that I believe that all allegations made against the People's Temple are unfounded. It is simply that until it is proven that the People's Temple has violated the laws of Guyana and the United States, and that the organization has undermined the rights of their American citizens members in Guyana and subjected them to cruel and inhuman treatment, we must remain objective.

CONS:RAMCoy:ddh

c.c. John D. Blacken, Charge d'Affaires a.i.